

GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE SOCIETY

5 N 1. General Introduction

131 The Northwest of China, consisting of the four provinces:
635 Shensi, Kansu, Chinghai, and Sinkiang, part of which is now
161 called the Sinkiang-Uighur Autonomous Region, comprises an
N area of 1.3 million square miles, (almost a third of all China),
144 in which thirty-six million people live. There are at least
563 four different racial types (Turanides, Sinides, Mongoloides
and Tangutides) and more than a dozen different ethnic groups:
Eastern Turks or New Uighur (chin. Wei-wu-erh), Chinese
(chin. Han), Chinese Muslims (chin. Han-hui or Tung-kan-
hui, Engl. Dungans), Kazakhs (chin. Ha-sa-k'o), Kirghiz
(chin. Chi-erh-chi-sau) Uzbeks (chin. Wu-tzu-pieh-k'o), Tatars
(chin. T'a-t'a-erh), Tajiks (chin. T'a-chi-k'o), Western
Mongols or Oirats (chin. Ölt or simply Meng-ku), Sarigh-
Uighurs (chin. Tung-hsiang-hui-hui), Shera Yügur (chin.
Tu-jen), Monguors (chin. also Tu-jen), Salars (chin. Sa-la),
Tibetans (chin. Hui-fan), Manchu (chin. Man), Sibo (chin.
N 563 Hui-po) and Solons (chin. So-lun). The last three ethnic
groups, the Manchus, Sibos, and Solons are persistently
listed in Communist censuses, although it has been proved
that they are non-existent as linguistic units, or as separate
ethnic groups. Numerically, the Chinese constitute the over-
whelming majority in the Northwest (about thirty million).

N 563 While the Turks of the Northwest (i. e. New Uighurs,
771 Kazakhs, Kirghiz, Uzbeks, Tatars and Salars) are rather
firm believers in Islam (Mohammedanism), the Western
Mongols, Sarigh-Uighurs (the latter are Turks), Shera
Yügur, and Tibetans are faithful Buddhists of the northern
form, also called Lama Buddhism, and the Chinese believe in
a variety of religious or philosophical systems: Confucianism,
Taoism, Buddhism, and even Demonism and Animism.

N 563 The economic pattern of the Northwest as well displays
233 an enormous variety; we find nomadic pastoralism among the
241 Kazakhs, Kirghis, Western Mongols, and Tibetans, intensive
horticulture among the New Uighur of the oasis-belt of Sinkiang,
agriculture by means of irrigation (kariz system. See chapter
about agriculture) among Chinese (only fifteen percent of
the Northwest agriculture is without any irrigation), sedentary
Turks and Mongols, and a mixture of primitive agriculture
and pastoralism among some Tibetan and Mongolian Tribes of
N 563 Chinghai and Kansu. The Turkic and the Chinese Muslims
43 are the bearers of the trade along the old "silk roads" of
N Sinkiang, Chinghai and Kansu. The urban centers of the Northwest
369 are also centers of petty industry and handicraft. The newest
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Moslem enterprise and Chinese skill. For example, not many years ago in Tao-chou Old City, Kansu, there was an extensive industry of casting brazen pots and kettles for the Tibetan trade. The metal used was from old Chinese square-holed coin that is no longer used. This coinage was bought up and transported by small Moslem trader-muleteers and then sold to the Chinese artisans, who did the casting. The finished product was sold again to the Moslems, who took it into the Tibetan country as an article of trade. Thus, by Moslem enterprise a market was found for the product of Chinese skill, which kept the foundry fires going a good part of the year. However, this cooperative effort would be interrupted by the frequent disputes between the Moslems and the Chinese authorities. In the rural towns and urban cities the general pattern of division of occupations and vocations is that the Moslems follow the more adventurous subsidiary callings, which require more hardship and daring. Such occupations as innkeeper, trader, muleteer, carter, soldier, and the like attract proportionately more Moslems than Chinese. The Chinese, on the other hand, tend to monopolize the handicraft occupations. They make the best carpenters, silversmiths, blacksmiths, masons, and tailors. There are two exceptions to this general rule. First, Moslems prepare and make up furs, probably because the handling of sheep and lambskins was closely associated with the butchering trade which, except for pork, is Moslem. Second, the Turks in Sinkiang are good carpet weavers. "The Turkestan carpet-weavers practice a family trade, using cow or camel hair in natural and in dyed shades. The boys sit before the handloom and weave very rapidly, with no apparent pattern to follow. They are working out the conventional design which has been done by their own family for many generations, for the patterns are traditional and no one would think of varying them." The Chinese show greater aptitude, at least greater preference, for the scholarly callings; they are school teachers, accountants (even in Moslem firms) doctors, engineers, and administrative officials in the civil service.

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The cooperation or division of labor is limited exclusively to the towns and cities. In the rural communities, the Moslems and Chinese have not chosen the way of tolerant cooperation. There is practically no strictly farming village which has an equal mixture of the two groups; in every case the village is predominantly one or the other. Generally, the population is composed almost entirely of one group with only a few hangers-on of the other. In the basic occupation of the village - farming - cooperation is found only among people of the same racial group. Between the Chinese and the Moslems the rivalry is of sufficient intensity to eliminate or segregate one of the parties. There are villages in which live both Chinese and Chinese Moslems although in very small number. In every case, however, the representation of the two groups is not numerically equal, but is predominantly one or the other.

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/The Han Chinese/

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[651] minority tribes or bandits, and lately there have been skirmishes between the warlords and between the Nationalists and the Communists. These disturbances have not only deprived the people of normal livelihood but also increased their financial burden, as they have been taxed heavily by both the government and the warlords to support the fighting armies. Moreover, the region is susceptible to the disasters of flood and famine. The corruption in officialdom, the banditry, the armies and the disasters have caused people of means to leave the region and make their homes elsewhere. Of course there are officials and rich merchants who have authority in political and economic matters, but it may be said that the majority of those left behind are small business men and poor farmers who stay on their land and struggle for a living.

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[131] It should be noted that the southeast part of Northwest China is the place where Chinese civilization and culture developed and matured. This region, around the Wei and Lo Rivers, referred to as Kuang-chung, was the most prosperous and well-developed part of China during many of the Imperial dynasties. According to Communist geographical division, Kuang-chung, the area within Shensi Province, is included in the Northwest region. It is a region of fertile soil, where Han Chinese farmers have made their homes for countless generations. The regions to the north and west are populated by the Chinese Moslems, the Mongols and the Tibetans. As this is the case, many Han Chinese who remained in the Northwest became merchants who traveled north to Mongolia and west to Sinkiang with their caravan trade. There are also soldiers and prisoners who had settled here generations ago.

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342 Village dwellings are the conventional types of mud huts. Some live in caves, the rich in elaborate caves with fine furnishings, the very poor in caves scooped out of the porous yellow earth cliffs. In cities and towns, where the wealthy merchants dwell, one of course finds the traditional big brick home with several courtyards, as well as modern two-story houses. But in Pao-chi, most of the people live in caves with regular doors and windows, dug out of the cliffs.

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[556] The eating habits of these people are slightly different from those of the Han Chinese in other parts of China, in that more flour than rice is consumed. Rich people have no difficulty in obtaining all the delicacies they desire. Meat, eggs, fruits, fowl, rice, flour and vegetables are their common fare, but the poor people can afford only barley flour, millet and salted vegetables for their daily diet. Tou-fu, soybean cake, is consumed by rich and poor alike. Clothing in this region resembles that worn by Chinese in other parts of the country. Among nomads and the poor, sheepskin coats are very common. They are worn with the fur side inside.

/Chinese Moslems (Dungans)/

Northerners are never without it.

2. Patterns of living

a. Dwellings

Houses of the Chinese Moslems are similar to those of the Han Chinese in style and construction. Externally their mosques resemble Chinese temples. There is always Arabic writing carved in wood above the entrance of the mosque to mark its identity. But in Sinkiang the style of mosque architecture is not Chinese, and the buildings as a rule have minarets.

Village life is very much like that of the Chinese. People live in mud huts with lattice woodwork, windows and simple furnishings. Well-to-do people in cities and towns, where they usually congregate in separate districts, live in Chinese style houses distinguished by the carvings on the windowframes, doorways and woodwork inside, which are of elaborate Arabic design quite different from Chinese wood carving. In both rich and poor homes the ancestral shrines and tablets are missing, and in their places are scrolls with Arabic writings or passages from the Koran. In the northern and western parts of this region the living quarters are simpler. There are colonies of flat-roofed mud houses built along the cliffs.

b. Food

Food habits are similar to those of the Han Chinese, though Moslems do not eat pork and consider it unclean. Meat is a luxury for the poor. Mutton is preferred, though beef is also used. In the western part of the region the very poor use horse meat, though it is forbidden by their religion. Vegetables are a part of their daily diet. In the northwest part of Sinkiang, fruits such as apricots, plums, mulberries, melons and grapes are available, as well as smaller quantities of pomegranates, apples and pears.

Mutton fat, butter and linseed oil are used for cooking. In eastern Sinkiang the style of cooking is influenced by the Persian, Chinese and Turkish styles. The Chinese Moslems abstain from wine, and are not much addicted to the smoking of opium. They do not like to eat with non-Moslems, especially the Han Chinese, because they consider pork eaters unclean. Strict followers of the religion even avoid eating utensils which have been used by others, and carry their own bread when they travel. No meat may be eaten unless the animal was killed according to prescribed religious ritual.

The style of dress for both sexes is generally the same as that of the Chinese except for the headdress. The Dungan men can be recognized by their white skullcaps, embroidered with a faint design in colored thread, whereas the usual cap of the Turk or Kazakh is colorful and more richly embroidered. Some Dungsans dress in gray and wear white or blue caps. For ceremonial occasions or worship, the linams, Ahungs and Mullahs, who sit

/Chinese Moslems (Dungans)/

within the railings in the mosque and read the Koran, wear white or green turbans, the leader's turban being more elaborate, with a tassel hanging down the back. Common people wear pointed octagonal caps of white, red or black, the color distinguishing the sect to which they belong.

Some women dress differently from the Chinese women, and wear a sort of turban hat. Ordinarily their dresses are in dark colors, but they may wear gay colors for festivals. According to ancient custom they must veil their faces in the presence of men, but this custom was abandoned long ago.

In cities and towns where the Chinese Moslems dress exactly like the Han Chinese, the men can be distinguished by their physical build and features, but the women are not easily recognized.

d. Occupation

Most Chinese Moslems are business men and traders, and most of them also farm. As farmers they are not equal to the Han Chinese, but they excel in dealing with cattle and everywhere they monopolize the beef and sheep trade. They are also merchants, bakers, workers in jade, money changers, and inn and restaurant keepers.

Outside a Moslem-owned restaurant there hangs a sign displaying a water pot surmounted by a dress hat, and two Chinese characters, Hui-hui. The pot signifies ceremonial cleanliness and guarantees that no pork is used. The hat indicates respect to customers. There are also two Chinese characters on the tea pot, meaning "Pure and True."

Formerly their religion forbade the Moslems to become money-lenders, barbers, fortune-tellers, actors, or servants or apprentices to the Chinese. How strictly the people now observe this taboo is not known.

3. Social values

a. Group spirit

The we-feeling is very strong among the Dungans. The whole group will sacrifice time and money for an individual oppressed by outsiders, and fight for him until justice prevails. Endowed with a courageous nature, the Moslem man is willing to sacrifice his life for the welfare of the group.

This spirit is shown by overt expression in daily social relationships. The Chinese title Lao-piao (old cousin) is applied even to a stranger of the same religious faith. The word old signifies respect; cousin signifies blood relationship. Hence Lao-piao indicates a feeling of closeness toward all members of the faith. Another expression of this feeling is found in the saying that "every Moslem in the world belongs to the same family."

b. Concept of charity

Many of the values in Chinese Moslem society are based upon

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the Chinese, Chinese Moslems and Sedentary Tibetans/
the Chinese in the Northwest meets with several obstacles. The one most difficult to overcome is the lack of attitudinal uniformity due to a multitude of historical, environmental and social factors which have molded the people's behavior in the Northwest. There is, to begin with, the difference between the urban and the rural situation, which even though prevalent all over China, has made for a specially pronounced diversity in the Northwest. Generally speaking, in centers like Sian or Lanchou attitudes are met with which do not differ too much from those prevalent in other cities of China. It has to be taken into account, though, that Sian has been the capital of the Chinese Empire for centuries up to about one thousand years ago, and this fact still shapes certain attitudes of the citizens of Sian today. Lanchou, on the other hand, is most definitely a frontier city, the last major outpost of Chinese civilization with an ostentatious pride in local traditions and relics of a cultural or esthetic nature, but open, on the other hand, to a colorful mixture of influences coming from a variety of peoples beyond the pale. The urban attitudes prevalent in Sian and Lanchou thus differ perceptively and both cities differ in certain respects from other Chinese metropolises. Their peculiarities influence in turn urban-rural and social tensions in a specific way.

The Chinese rural scene, on the other hand, displays a variety of factors accounting for attitudinal diversity. There are the differences of the loess-cave dwellers and the mud-hut dwellers, those of the irrigational farmer and the one on hills or mountain slopes; there are regions of compact minorities or dominant majorities of Moslems and finally, regions along the few great thoroughfares and regions of remote seclusion.

The picture gains in complexity in the real frontier areas, Western Kansu, Chinghai and Sinkiang, where the Chinese constitute a minority. Here the diversity of peoples with whom the Chinese have contact, the geographical differences, the professional differences, differences of the duration of stay, of the home province of the settlers account for attitudinal patterns which change from settlement to settlement.

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What is attempted in the following pages is, in view of the difficulties, and furthermore, in view of the pitifully scanty coverage of the area in the literature, to present a few samples of pertinent observations, which might add up to some general notions. In the selection, stress has been laid on the frontier regions, as the regions within the pale, reference still can be made to the General Handbook.

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In their book, The Gobi Desert (New York, 1944), Mildred Cable and Francesca French describe the Chinese people's life in the fortress of Chia-yu-kuan in Western Kansu, which they visited in the thirties: "Inside of the fortress, life was divided into three distinct sections, each of which had an existence quite

/Chinese, Chinese Moslems and Sedentary Tibetans/

181 use it. In this little backwater town large business deals were
436 effected, but each roll of dollars received for payment was
opened, the contents carefully examined, and the individual coins
valued a little higher or a little lower according to the Tunhwang
standard." (pp. 69-70).

423 The landowners in the Tunhwang district are mainly Chinese
181 whose ancestors were established here very long ago. The Chi-
• 369 nese farmers are more conservative than the town folks. The rural
241 rural pattern here is different from that of other parts of the North-
361 west. Here the farmsteads are dotted over the area, each stands
(351) in the center of its own land and each at a considerable distance
(342) from the other. The larger farms are surrounded by a high wall
(321) which is a small fortification, and inside the wall is a substantial
(614) house made of sun-dried bricks and excellent timber. Most of
the farmsteads are spacious and built to accommodate large num-
bers of people, for it is customary that all the members of a clan
live together in their generations.

631 The author of The Gobi Desert recorded another interesting
feature of the Tunhwang oasis. The record says that Tunhwang
is divided into as many sections as there are prefectures in the
whole of the province of Kansu. Its colonization brought men
from all areas, who were anxious to honor the cities which they
represented, by erecting temple buildings. The result is that the
traveller wanders through the oasis as through a replica of the
whole province of Kansu, stepping from the section called after
the town of Chingchow to that called Liangchow, from Kaitai to
Pingfan, or from Pingliang to Titao, in the course of an afternoon
stroll. Near one of these temples was a very old carved stone
(532) figure of a man, which was not an idol but was said to represent
(172) a historic personage.

157 Of the Chinese people of the wayside in the Gobi Desert
485 Miss Cable writes: "The intense isolation of the inhabitant of a
(511) small oasis, and the extraordinarily low standard of life imposed
upon him, produce a strange mentality. His normal condition is
torpor. He sits or lies on his mud bed and thinks of nothing.
Only when a traveler arrives does he experience the discomfort
of rousing himself, but then though it may be cold or windy, he
must leave the pleasant stuffiness of his bed-living-room, throw
off the greasy coverlet which he has drawn over his crossed legs,
come into the open and give the service, which is demanded of
him as innkeeper. The life of the innkeeper's wife is more bare
and poor. Clothing, which has some place in the thought of
nearly every woman, is, to her, absolutely nothing but a protec-
tion from cold and a covering for her nakedness. The other inci-
dents of her life are concerned with food and the birth of her
children. She knows that her husband has some money, but she
has never thought of money as a means of securing comforts

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suitable cotton strains for sowing and the best methods of irrigation for the large-scale cultivation of cotton in the province. 17,000 hectares (42,907 acres) are now being surveyed in the Kansu corridor and the vast plains along the Yellow River in Northwest China for future establishment of mechanized state farms. Altogether, the corridor and the plain are estimated to have over 650,000 hectares (1,616,150 acres) of wasteland. In 1954, it was found that the greater part of 200,000 hectares (494,200 acres) of wasteland surveyed was suitable for cotton; three new mechanized state farms have been set up so far there.

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Some of the information available on agricultural policy in Kansu deals with the area around Lanchow, where there is some suburban farming, and the development of cooperatives in the Wu-chung Hui Nationality Autonomous Chou of Kansu Province (from a speech by Ma Teng-ai delivered on July 22, 1955, to the National People's Congress). Discussion of these areas will not give us a complete picture of the progress or difficulties in agricultural development but they will indicate the trend of agriculture in Kansu.

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In Lanchow, it was reported that the landlord class and "feudal" exploitation of the peasants in the suburban areas had been abolished. 15,112 mou (2,297 acres) of land had been confiscated and distributed among 20,400 peasants who possessed no land or very little. Production and livelihood materials were also distributed among these peasants. So far, seven vegetable and agricultural producer co-ops and 606 mutual aid teams are in existence in the suburban areas. These included roughly 32.45 per cent of the peasant households; expanding agricultural production to meet the daily growing needs for vegetables in the city has been stressed. By fall of 1956 it is planned to have eighty-three per cent of all agricultural rural households in the suburbs, in agricultural producer co-ops. Two socialist vegetable producer co-ops will be established. Future emphasis will be on the expansion of vegetable farms, orchards, and development of poultry and pig rearing.

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The city of Lanchow has grown greatly in the past five years with the influx of troops, technicians, laborers, and their families. It is questionable whether agriculture in the surrounding areas can have maintained this population growth. This would imply that some food would need to have been shipped from China. There have been some difficulties in developing co-ops and mutual aid teams, as in other parts of the Northwest. Planned purchases and marketing of food, extremely critical in this neighborhood since the urban life of Lanchow rests upon these marketing procedures, have not been carried off successfully and have slowed up cooperativization. There has been evidence of bureaucratization, lack of class responsibility toward the poor and middle peasants, and a lack of serious study and investigation of conditions.